

DULUTH AMERICAN INDIAN COMMISSION MEETING
Monday, December 22, 2008 - 5:00 p.m.
Room 402 City Hall

Members Present: Warner Wirta, Dr. Robert Powless, Ron Boshey, Tony LaDeaux, Ricky DeFoe, Dr. Joy Dorscher, Toni Dickenson, Michele Gordon.

Excused Absent: Donna Ennis, Renee K. Van Nett.

Unexcused Absent: Bea Kitto

Staff present: John Judd

Others present: See sign-in sheets.

CALL TO ORDER, APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND INTRODUCTIONS:

Motion by Bob Powless, seconded by Ron Boshey, to approve the agenda. The motion was unanimously approved.

Introductions of all present.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE NOVEMBER 24, 2008 MEETING:

Ron Boshey questioned a statement in the minutes, in the second paragraph, under the announcements. It was correct in the minutes, as to it being discussed.

Motion by Joy Dorscher, seconded by Bob Powless, to approve the Duluth American Indian Commission minutes from the November 24, 2008 meeting. The motion was unanimously approved.

Motion by Ron Boshey, seconded by Bob Powless, to not have a media subcommittee. The motion was unanimously approved.

COMMUNITY PUBLIC FORUM / OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:

Bob Grytdahl brought information/handouts regarding housing discrimination. If people feel they are victims of housing discrimination, they can contact Bob Grytdahl, and the 800 number on the handout: 800-765-9372. The number of the Human Rights Office in Duluth is 730-5630.

Discussion regarding what is considered unlawful discrimination: disability, race, familial status, color, national origin, religion, sex. Disability is the most discriminated class according to Mr. Grytdahl.

Louise Burnett was here to speak about having problems with her landlords. She has been in the same housing unit for almost four years, and for the past two years she has been having problems with the landlord maybe due to her young age, or Native American heritage. She is a single mother of three children. It takes a long time for them to come and fix things, and often they are not done properly. Sometimes they do not fix things at all in the apartment. She has also had problems with the neighbors, and the landlord tells her to "suck it up." The landlord has threatened to evict her if she keeps complaining. Ms. Burnett's father was also present, and shared the experiences he has seen. She was accused of punching another resident and knocking her down, but the time frame was not right, and they both deny this happened. Mr. Burnett tries to stick up for his daughter, but this is not working either. This is a Section 8 housing unit and Ms. Burnett has talked to her Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) case worker but there has been no action taken. The Burnetts talked to Bob Grytdahl at the start of tonight's meeting and are scheduled to see him in his office again this week.

The Burnetts have also reported to police about drug users/dealers living and dealing in the building. They have not seen anything happen in regard to this. Ricky Defoe suggested that they also document any interactions, reports they make to the police, etc. Ron Boshey suggested having a housing subcommittee formed, and also inviting the Housing and Redevelopment Authority Board/Staff members to come to a meeting here so we can let them know what people are going through and ironing some of this out.

Tony LaDeaux brought up having an attorney to assist in these matters. He said he knew one and let the Burnetts know and give them his number.

Joy Dorscher suggested Louise Burnett use a tape recorder in conversations with her landlord. The Burnetts have a fear of being evicted if they speak up. Toni Dickenson shared that they can evict unless there is a lease. The Burnetts have a year lease.

Joe Boshey was present and shared he was also turned down by HRA, and belittled by them during the process. They talked to him like he was "a kid," he said. They told him to "shut up and listen to what they had to say." He admits that he is now in recovery. He shared feeling worthless. He used the appeal process, but this ended up the same way, he reported. He was told he was denied because of his criminal record and he cannot apply again until 2016. Ron Boshey said he had called Rick Ball about what was happening to his brother. He was told that the Ball has to listen to his staff and follow their recommendations. Toni Dickenson also reported that she has seen cases similar to Joe's happening to clients of American Indian Legal Aid, in regard to HRA, e.g., cases of the staff speaking down to clients, blocking their access to housing, providing wrong/misleading information etc.

Brad Clifford was present and shared that there have been cases brought to County court regarding housing issues. Tenants have also successfully taken landlords to

court, he reported. They have been heard and given monetary wins with enough documentation and clear presentation.

OLD BUSINESS:

Discussion of Work Plan and Schedule for 2009 -

Our first two meetings of the New Year will be on the 4th Monday of the month, instead of the 3rd Monday, due to holidays each month. (January and February of 2009).

Dr. Powless recommended two things: Moving review of ISD #709 issues from May into March. Ron Haglund is replacing George Himango in the ISD #709, and we might want him here as the Commission looks at the issues with primary education. Dr. Powless suggested inviting Ron Haglund to the March. Dr. Powless would also like the Commission to make a request to the HRA Board/Staff and see if we can get them to attend the February meeting

Discussion on subcommittees was held, and new committees suggested: Health Care and Housing as two examples of new possible sub-committees. Discussion on the Barrels in Lake Superior was brought up as an example of a subcommittee that much of the work is now turned over to Red Cliff Tribe. Dr. Powless suggested maintaining contact with them. They can then inform us of what is happening on this matter and, if anything is new, we can have this item back on our agenda. This is what happens with the AICHO Indian Center issues, when there is new information to be shared them bringing it to the Commission meeting.

John Judd said the U.S. Census is looking for someone from the Indian Commission to sit on that Mayor's committee to assist in more accurate counting of Native people. This is important and we need to have someone from here to sit on that committee.

In the January meeting we will be looking at reports from the subcommittees and designating commission members who sit on the standing and other subcommittees in the community, such as the Children's Initiative Justice meeting during the coming year.

Ricky DeFoe brought up being cautious regarding putting the barrels issue on the back burner. It needs to continue being discussed and brought forth here, as an important matter. Co-chairs need to limit the time spent discussing this issue, but we cannot put it on the "back Burner."

Warner Wirta reminded us that we need to keep our Spirit Mountain subcommittee as well.

Dr. Bob Powless has contacted the Mayor and Karen Diver to ask if the seat on the Spirit Mountain board could be filled by a Native person. Dr. Powless suggested Ricky DeFoe for this position.

Motion by Bob Powless, seconded by Warner Wirta, to send a letter to the Mayor regarding appointing a Native person, who knows the importance of Spirit Mountain culturally and the meaning it has to Native people traditionally, to the Spirit Mountain Authority board. The motion was unanimously approved.

Joy Dorscher and Michele Gordon will work on this letter and get it to John Judd.

Dr. Bob will let Ron Haglund know about our meeting requesting him to be present.

NEW BUSINESS:

Establishment of a Nomination Committee –

Tony LeDeaux volunteered to be on this committee. Renee Van Nett was also appointed by the co-chairs for this committee. This committee will provide a list of candidates at the next meeting. Nominations can also be taken from the floor during the election.

Announcements, Upcoming Events and Comments from Commission Members -

Each commission member shared events and offered comments from a personal perspective.

John Judd shared that due to budget cuts, we may have to hold our meetings elsewhere, with our own laptop computer to take notes, and minimal City staff time for our committee business. Moving the meeting was agreed would be very detrimental, due to the public now knowing about and coming to our meetings here at City Hall. This is a possibility. Dr. Powless asked about using Commission or private funds for pay for City Staff time. John Judd will keep us updated on this matter.

NEXT MEETING/DATE/LOCATION:

Monday, January 26, 2009 – 5:00 p.m., City Hall, Room 402

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion by Bob Powless, seconded by Ron Boshey, to adjourn the meeting. The motion was unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:20 p.m.